

**STATEMENT OF  
CHAIRMAN MICHAEL K. POWELL**

*Re: Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities; CC Docket No. 98-67*

The digital migration creates tremendous opportunities for all Americans. Our decision today brings important innovation and additional choice to Americans with hearing disabilities. For over a decade, the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) has enabled persons with hearing and speech disabilities to communicate by telephone through live intermediaries. With the cooperative effort of hundreds of communications carriers, this process has proved tremendously successful. However TRS – like all telecommunications services – cannot remain technologically static. Instead we must continue to ensure that innovation in the marketplace yield greater opportunities for TRS users.

Our action today permits a technology that generates live, word-for-word captions of spoken telephone conversations to become eligible for TRS funds. Despite the emergence of impressive new technologies that can transfer speech to text rapidly and accurately, the Commission's TRS funding rules simply did not provide funds to some new technologies that could make communications with people who are deaf or hard of hearing easier and faster than ever before.

This Commission has dedicated itself to building on the decade of TRS excellence through greater flexibility and technological adaptation. That is the philosophy that supported our recent TRS Further Notice, our IP Relay Order and today's decision. I look forward to working with my colleagues, industry and the disability community to build on this strong foundation.